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AUTHOR Barber, Louis S.
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ABSTRACT

The paper summarizes efforts in California to provide handicapped secondary students with work experience education. Three types of work experience programs in California are noted (exploratory, general, and vocational work experience). Selection criteria for students include age level, full-time pupil basis, approval of parent/guardian and school guidance service, and appropriate vocational or educational goal. Employer selection criteria (including knowledge of the program and willingness to supervise and keep records) are also listed. Self-assessment and reviews by consultants are among the program evaluation methods identified. Elements of successful programs are administrative support and qualified personnel. A related project operating classroom training and part-time work experience is described. (CL)

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STATE EDUCATION BUILDING, 721 CAPITOL MALL, SACRAMENTO 95814

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Presented by: Louis S. Barber
Assistant Superintendent and Director
Office of Special Education
California State Department of Education

SUMMARY:
WORK EXPERIENCE EDUCATION FOR
INDIVIDUALS WITH EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS
AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL
IN CALIFORNIA

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It is the philosophy of the California State Department of Education that every student enrolled in a California public school, regardless of handicapping condition, should be provided opportunities for intellectual, social, emotional, and vocational development that will prepare him or her to find a place in society as a productive, participating member of the community.

Throughout the nation, the need for career and vocational opportunities for students with exceptional needs has been recognized as critical. Work experience education, in which a student participates in work activities while attending school, is a crucial component of career and vocational preparation.

A major goal of the Department of Education, Office of Special Education, is to ensure that every student enrolled in a special education program shall have achieved, one of the following:

- a. Placement on a full-time job - such placement maximizes the capabilities in which he/she has received basic training.
- b. Placement in an on-the-job training position in which he or she will receive additional training directed toward a vocational skill - such training designed to maximize his or her capabilities.
- c. Continued education and/or training directed toward reaching an occupational objective - such preparation designed to maximize his or her capabilities in a community college, trade school or vocational school.

- d. Continued education and training directed toward reaching a technical or professional objective - such preparation designed to maximize his or her capabilities in a university or college program.

The impact of work experience education on the community, the state, and the nation, has not been fully appreciated; and its potential has been unjustly underestimated. The estrangement of many young people from the mores and values of the larger society may be traced to their inability to achieve a positive, productive, wage-earning role.

In California, work experience education is recognized as a vital part of the total education process. It is designed to enable students to choose wisely, prepare for full-time employment, and learn to work with others in ways that are successful and rewarding. Work experience education programs extend the learning experience of the student into the community.

There are three types of work experience education in California. They are:

- o Exploratory work experience: Students observe different aspects of occupations and receive related instruction for the purpose of determining their interest in such occupations or vocations.
- o General work experience: Students are paid for working and receive related instruction for the purpose of acquiring desirable work habits and attitudes. The paid employment need not be related to the student's career goal.
- o Vocational work experience: Students receive actual on-the-job training for paid employment directly related to their chosen vocation. They are concurrently receiving instruction in work-related skills.

These programs provide opportunities to train, support, and encourage students to acquire vocational skills. Students with exceptional needs often have the greatest need for job training. However, they usually do not succeed in regular vocational programs without assistance. They need conditions that permit a variety of training methods and the support of a number of agencies and individuals.

Section 56345(b)(1) of the California Education Code specifies that, when appropriate, the individualized education program (IEP) shall also include, but not be limited to... For secondary grade level pupils, specially designed vocational education and career development, with emphasis on vocational training and preparation for remunerative employment, additional vocational training or additional career development opportunities, as appropriate.

Recognition of the importance of work experience education to the future employability of students with special needs is evident in California. Although work experience education is not mandated, the Title 5, California Administrative Code, Regulations for Special Education programs includes specially designed vocational education and career development such as:

- o Establishing work training programs within the school and community.

- o Assisting in job placement.
- o Instructing job trainers and employers as to the unique needs of the individual.
- o Maintaining regularly scheduled contact with all work stations and job-site trainers.

STUDENT SELECTION CRITERIA

Once an assessment of the student's interests, abilities, and work temperament has been completed, the IEP team, which in most cases includes the student, determines whether or not work experience education is appropriate.

In determining the appropriateness of work experience education for a student, factors such as, student motivation and parental support must be considered.

Unlike many students entering work experience education, students with exceptional needs seldom have a "job-in-hand." Recognition of this situation has prompted many school districts to establish specialized work experience programs. In addition, coordinators who have been trained to work with special education students are employed to implement these programs.

Participation in work experience education is open to all students who meet the following criteria:

1. Be at least 16 years of age, except:
 - a. A pupil enrolled in exploratory work experience education.
 - b. A pupil with exceptional needs, as determined by the principal.
2. Be a full-time pupil. For the purposes of this section, a full-time pupil means one of the following:
 - a. A legally indentured apprentice or a continuation pupil, regardless of the number of subjects or the school in which he is enrolled.
 - b. A pupil enrolled in four or more subjects, including work experience education as one of such subjects.
 - c. A pupil enrolled in a summer school approved pursuant to regulations of the State Board.
 - d. A pupil enrolled in less than four subjects, other than work experience education in the last semester or quarter of the 12th grade pursuant to the provisions of Section 46145 or 46147 of the Education Code.
3. Have a parental or guardian approval.

4. Have the approval of the school guidance service to enroll in the work experience education chosen.
5. Have a vocational or educational goal to which the work experience education chosen will, in the opinion of the district, contribute.

EMPLOYER SELECTION CRITERIA

Prior to participation in the program, the employer must be fully aware of the responsibilities involved in providing a work station or offering exploratory work experiences to a student with special needs. The work experience coordinator must help the employer to understand the student's needs and abilities. With this assistance, the employer maintains enthusiasm for the programs in which he or she have chosen to participate. The key to a successful work experience for a student is the employer's ability to encourage growth and recognize improvement in each student.

In addition, the following criteria are also used to select an employer:

1. The employer is in sympathy with the educational objective of providing work experience for the pupil.
2. The employer knows of the intent and purpose of the type of work experience education in which the pupil is enrolled.
3. The employer agrees to provide adequate supervision to ensure a planned program of the pupil's job activities in order that the pupil may receive maximum education benefit.
4. The employer, as required by law, agrees to provide adequate compensation insurance whenever the pupil is being paid a cash salary or wage.
5. The employer agrees to maintain accurate records of the pupil's attendance.
6. The employer has adequate equipment, materials, and other facilities to provide an appropriate learning opportunity.
7. Employer can provide overall working conditions which will not endanger the health, safety, welfare or morals of the student.

EVALUATION OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Thorough evaluation of work experience education programs is best accomplished through self-assessment procedures. Work experience education coordinators along with members of the district's work experience education advisory committee and other faculty members most often participate in the self-assessment.

Other methods of evaluation include:

- Prior to the end of the semester, a questionnaire including basic questions about the program is distributed to work experience education students.
- Work experience coordinators from nearby districts visit and review the program and make recommendations for improvement of the program.
- State regional vocational education and special education consultants review the program.

The development and use of a five-year follow-up plan, using a yearly survey to determine where graduates are working is also encouraged. Basic information is usually gained through telephone or postcard inquiries. Graduates are asked to comment and make suggestions regarding the post-high school value of the work experience program. Specific recommendations for curriculum change are also requested. Districts reporting vocational work experience education students as part of their vocational program must report follow-up data on these students to the State Department of Education. At present, it is not a requirement to report follow-up data on exploratory or general work experience education students.

ELEMENTS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS

Elements critical to the success of work experience education programs in California include the following:

1. Administrative support and understanding of the necessity for the inclusion of special education students in work experience education.
2. Qualified personnel who are able to:
 - a. Analyze specific employment situations and identify jobs that match the needs and interests of making job breakdowns, preparing job descriptions, and transforming job requirements into an educational program.
 - b. Survey communities for potential training stations, make contact with employers, and persuade employers to cooperate with the schools in work-study training programs.
 - c. Work with other agencies to coordinate on-campus, off-campus and work experienced education assignments wherein less than the minimum wage is being paid to a student.
 - d. Make evaluations for occupational potential and evaluate the trainee's progress once he or she has been placed in a training situation.
 - e. Conduct ongoing "follow-up" studies in each phase of the work experience education program and use this information to revise related instruction and modify the program.

3. Establish strong relationships between the school and the business community.
4. Active and thorough recruitment strategies which encourage students with exceptional needs to explore and become part of the world of work.
5. Comprehensive promotional plans to gain support in the community for work experience education activities.

The Impact of High School Curriculum as a Result of Changing Employment Picture

One project which was initiated in 1981 by the Office of Special Education will have major impact upon high school curricula: the Model Site Projects for Cooperative Education and Private Sector Employment for High School Individuals with Exceptional Needs. This project, which we call Project "Work-Ability" began in 1981 as a demonstration project in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Three state agencies and their local divisions: Employment Development Department, Department of Rehabilitation, and the Department of Education, joined fiscal, administration, and training resources to test the concept of interagency efforts toward the goal of finding permanent unsubsidized employment for handicapped secondary students.

In the spring of 1982, thirty-three new sites were chosen to operate classroom training and part-time work experience in the private sector, for an anticipated 1400 students in California. Many sites chosen were rural, with unemployment rates in the 20% to 30% range. Many sites are using high technology employers in urban areas. All projects received an average grant of \$25,000 of PL 94-142 funds to initiate these projects (\$1.1 million total). In July 1982, the Employment Development Department set aside \$235,000 of State Youth Funds for participant wages for work experience training as well as an additional \$431,475 of local EDD in-kind resources to support local training efforts. The Department of Rehabilitation will provide \$1,313,569 of state and local in-kind resources, which includes an estimated \$250,000 for case services for project participants.

The goal of the project is best summarized as follows:

"To develop a cost-effective interagency employment and training model that will enable handicapped secondary students (ages 17-22) to obtain and keep unsubsidized employment in the private sector.

Expected benefits of the project should include:

- 1) Revised realistic curriculum for handicapped students in secondary education.
- 2) Cost-effective data management systems among agencies.
- 3) Local delivery systems which combine interagency training and resources for handicapped students.

- 4) Improved attitudes of parents, employers, students, and teachers with regard to the employability of handicapped students.

A single evaluation design for all agencies is being developed to prepare for future directions in terms of legislation, funding, education, and curricula. In addition, all project directors will have computerized access to assistance from other sites. State training opportunities from Rehabilitation, Employment, Employment Development, Education, CETA, and National Association for Retarded Citizens will be provided at project director meetings during the year.